

THE YOUTH OF EUROPE

By BALDUR von SCHIRACH

In the pages of this magazine we have repeatedly pointed out that in the last two years the former nationalistic spirit of the Axis nations has gradually given way to an ideology of increasing scope and has become European on the one hand, East Asiatic on the other. This observation of ours is confirmed, as far as Europe is concerned, in the following article. Baldur von Schirach, once the leader of German youth, is today the foremost representative of the younger generation of all Europe.
—K.M.

TO most people who look back from the heights of life to the valleys of their childhood, the days of their youth appear as days without worry. Whatever they may have experienced and suffered in the years of youthful growth and maturing has paled in the memory of those who are no longer apprentices but proven masters of life. They measure all the troubles of youth by the standard of great suffering, and smile at the fear felt by a boy in school who has spent the afternoon playing instead of doing his algebra problems. Yet youthful worries weigh just as heavily in the life of young people as those of grownups in their struggle for existence. It is one of Heaven's great gifts that memory transfigures suffering. Even mature people find it impossible to recall past pain, whether of a physical or spiritual nature, in such a way that, through the memory of it, they can experience once again the full agony of what they have gone through.

Memory possesses no greater power than hope. Time draws over both its fine veils, which are spread over what has been and what is to come. The further we are removed from childhood, the less capable are our eyes of distinguishing the phenomena and experiences which meant good or evil to us. It is like the haze of a midsummer day which softens contours and covers distant mountains and woods with its own breath of gold, so that the familiar countryside, although present as ever, seems unreal and transfigured in the radiant atmos-

phere. Otherwise the human spirit would not be able to endure this life. But, in this way, all that has been is purified. In the continuous transformation of human life, what is near grows far and what is far grows near. The present slips away from us with every hour and turns into ghost-like past. And from day to day the future comes more into the present, until the circle is closed in that hour of our existence in which we belong entirely to the future, that is to say, on the last day of our life, when we are also claimed entirely by the past.

PREWAR YOUTH

This is an axiom which is applicable to all generations. And yet we must ask whether the eruptive event of the Great War, which has so fundamentally changed our continent, has not transformed the life of youth before and after 1914 so decisively that the ideas of most people who were young before 1914 regarding youthful existence have become false. The young people before the Great War were indeed a generation whose problems developed essentially between the two poles of home and school. It was a generation that grew up in security. Its homes were idyllic. For many decades, generations of boys and girls developed in the safety of a family life that was determined by the regular work of the father and the care of the home by the mother. This life knew no great upheavals. Above all, the young man of the middle classes could, after a careful choice of his career, count upon his life

developing similarly to that of his parents, with the same or even a better income.

There were people who could see far enough to discern the signs of an approaching change on the domestic and foreign political horizons. But there were not many who seriously attempted to interpret these signs of the times. The tension between the peoples of Europe had not yet been discharged, nor did the tremendous social tension begin to discharge yet within those states which had, without being aware of it, received a new social class, namely, the industrial worker. Those who were seventeen or eighteen years old at that time have indeed had a wonderful childhood and youth, in spite of the gigantic burden later placed on them by the war which, once and for all, put an end to the idyllic period of their lives and doubtless also deeply affected their whole attitude toward life.

OUR YOUTH WAS DIFFERENT

The social life, the gay laughter, dancing, and games of those years have disappeared for ever. We cannot imagine ourselves in this period of truly carefree prewar youth. And the older generation, which remembers it, must realize that the young people have grown up differently. To them the Great War means a home without a father, as well as a childhood under a heroic star.

Those who, like us Germans, experienced the collapse of their nation undefeated in battle know to what extent young people must bear their share of the national destiny beyond the personal worries of their own lives. This destiny did not ask whether we were half-grown boys. Of course, even in those days children were children. But the young people growing up knew that they had no future to look forward to.

The men of the Versailles Dictate had no intention of granting full peace to a heroic enemy who had laid down his weapons while trusting in the fourteen points of an American president, a peace which could have been the basis for the harmonious reconstruction of a new

Europe. They wanted to exterminate the German people and destroy its future. Their peace dictate did not only disarm the soldiers; it was also a blow at women and children and deprived a whole generation of our people of its youth. The famous words of the Frenchman Clemenceau, whom history has called "the tiger," to the effect that "there are still 20 million people too many in Germany," are characteristic of the spirit in which the men of Versailles wanted to reorganize Europe.

The blows delivered at Germany hit our allies just as hard. After the Great War, all the ideals of youth had become doubtful. In Germany, Marxism had seized power in the State. Our younger generation was placed before the choice either of accepting the blessings of a so-called democracy, i.e., of participating in the general struggle of all against all, or of devoting their entire strength, in opposition to the existing system, to the struggle for the "obsolete" ideals for which their fathers and brothers had fallen at the front. By deciding to take this struggle upon themselves, the best among the youthful activists of our nation became a nucleus of the new order of German life and created the conditions for the resurrection of the nation. In those days, the nationalistic youth organizations were formed which defended their ideals in bloody fights against Communist bands.

A POLITICAL PROGRAM

All these organizations lacked a political program. The former Reich was split up into bourgeois and proletarian parties. To be nationalistic was the privilege of a caste which was better off than the millions who, through their labors, created the basis of national wealth. Privileges of birth and property raised some of the sons of the people above others; yet, during the years of trial, in the struggle for the freedom of the nation, the children of the so-called proletariat fought no less bravely than the scions of the bourgeois world. In the face of the enemy's bullets, there was no difference between high and low, rich and poor.

And now, after the greatest collapse our people had ever known, came a soldier of the war and announced to us that, just as out there all Germans had been judged only by whether they were brave or not, a new Reich was to arise in which all Germans, whether they belonged to the nobility, the bourgeoisie, or the peasantry, would be judged only according to their work. And while the German politicians of that time spoke about the rights of our enemies, Adolf Hitler proclaimed the rights of the people. In the Party program of the National-Socialist German Workers' Party, he laid the foundations for a Reich of national honor, freedom, and social justice.

BELIEVE, OBEY, FIGHT

Through Adolf Hitler, the youth of Germany was given a new ideal. Certain parliamentarians, in order to win the support of young people for their parties, had promised these young people all kinds of rights. Adolf Hitler spoke to youth of its duty. He taught his young followers obedience, courage, and a faith that does not know the word "impossible." In Italy, Mussolini had given the youth of his country the proud, heroic motto which can be seen on the walls of the Fascist training schools and in the sport arenas of the Fascist militia: "*Credere obediare combattere*" (believe, obey, fight). It is the secret of the success of all great educators that they take youth seriously, for youth wants to be taken seriously. To take youth seriously means to have confidence in it and to make demands upon it which fortify its efforts at independence and make it feel that, on its part, it is doing something useful and essential that is benefiting not only itself but all generations.

There have been pedagogues whose methods of education were identical with the behavior of an elderly aunt towards her twelve-year-old nephew. Others again have tried to win youth by instruction. Ever since the world has existed, the most varied methods have been attempted of educating and shaping the younger generation of all peoples. In this way, the centuries have seen the

rise of innumerable pedagogic systems. The goals of these systems are as manifold as the systems themselves. Unrestricted individual freedom was proclaimed at one place, while at the same time, at another place, the educational goal preached was the complete renunciation of all the values of personality and the absorption of the individual in a spirit-negating mass machine-state. England through her feudal school system created educational centers for a small, wealthy caste, a caste which, in spite of all loudly proclaimed democratic ideals, carefully saw to it that the conducting of the political and economic affairs of the Empire was reserved exclusively for its members.

How can the success of the youth movements created by the Axis be explained? When in 1926 Mussolini founded the first State youth organization of the world since the downfall of little Sparta, the enthusiastic youth of the rising Fascist empire spontaneously combined in the "Balilla." They thus glorified the memory of that heroic boy who saved his native town of Genoa in 1746 by discovering the approach of the enemy and holding back the first invaders by throwing stones until he fell a victim to the battle. The National-Socialist youth movement, founded on voluntary participation, grew in the course of ten years into an organization of millions which by December 1, 1936, the day on which the Hitler Youth Law was proclaimed, included ninety per cent of the entire younger generation of Germany.

"YOUTH MUST BE LED BY YOUTH"

If I look back on the development undergone by the Hitler Youth and ask myself what ideas were responsible for its continuous rise, I arrive at the following results: The Hitler Youth was not made by the State for youth but by youth for the State. It was a voluntary contribution of the younger generation of the Reich towards its development and towards the strengthening of its defenses. From the very start, the goal of the Hitler Youth was not youth but the nation. For that reason it has been able to surmount the danger which was so

fatal to former, smaller youth movements, the danger of accentuating the contrast between the generations instead of bridging it.

I distinguish two main forms of youth leadership: that supplied by the State and that supplied by the ranks of youth. In the first case, the State delegates official instructors, etc., from other educational institutions and commissions them with the leadership of youth. In the second case, the State commissions youth to form a corps of leaders from its own ranks. The State limits itself to supplying the principles according to which this corps of leaders is to function.

The Führer has given the youth of the National-Socialist movement the slogan: "Youth must be led by youth." Thus those young people who had talent for leadership came to the top in all the units of our youth movement.

The leaders of the Hitler Youth must begin very young to maintain themselves in front of their comrades by the power of their natural authority. The range of duties corresponds to the age of the young leaders. Every young leader bears responsibility, and I feel that this shouldering of responsibility cannot be overestimated in its educational importance. A system of this kind is founded entirely on confidence. Even the youngest leader of our units is aware of this confidence, which obliges and enables him to fulfill the expectations placed in him. The self-leadership of youth has long passed the stage of experiment. Today it is the basis of German national education and has also been employed with immense success in school education.

THE NEW SCHOOL

In the Adolf Hitler schools, established by order of the Führer, we have continued to develop the idea of self-leadership of youth by consistently applying the experience gained in the Hitler Youth to school communities. Naturally, the various subjects of the curriculum are taught there by competent teachers from the ranks of the Hitler Youth. But the young people themselves are responsible

for the discipline of their community. Every age has its leaders of its own age who are under the school leaders and are responsible to them for the smooth running of the institution. Older Hitler Youth leaders keep check on younger ones.

It is quite unthinkable that, in an Adolf Hitler school, such scenes could take place as are customary in many schools of the old type. If, in an examination—which is, of course, written in the absence of the teacher—a boy does not know something, he does not secretly copy from his neighbor but openly asks him and then enters in a special book what he did not know. For in this school he would not be deceiving his teacher but himself and his community. Besides, achievements in scholarship alone are not the most important standard. The things that decide are the rating in comradeship, the judgment of the whole personality, character, and attributes of leadership.

We all of us remember from our young days the strange things that would sometimes happen during lessons. Perhaps the chair collapsed under the teacher at his desk because one leg had been sawn half through; or there was a sudden rattle of crackers on the blackboard at the moment when the secrets of differential and calculus were being revealed to us. These things happened because it was not we who were responsible for our own discipline but a teacher who was commissioned by the State not only to teach us but also to lead us. But how few people there are whom Nature has endowed simultaneously with the talents of providing instruction and of being able to educate young people by virtue of their natural authority. Great teachers at universities and colleges sometimes have this gift. But it is to be found less often in schools.

The Adolf Hitler school draws a sharp distinction between leading and instructing youth. And I believe that, for this very reason, there are few institutions in which a teacher enjoys as much respect as here, where he has no other duty

than that of filling young people with enthusiasm for his subject and equipping them with the necessary knowledge for later life. It goes without saying that in a school of this kind, which is constantly replenished with the most outstanding boys of every age and from our whole nation, considerable demands are also made upon the instructors. Physical education occupies a large part of the whole program. Those who teach in this field must themselves be able to perform everything that they demand from the pupils of the Adolf Hitler schools.

IDEALS MUST BE HIGH

I have dwelt so long on the development of the German youth movement because this example of the experience of the youth of one nation is of significance far beyond the borders of one country. In a time when the State had nothing to give them, the young people of Germany found the strength to overcome the prevailing distress. In the ranks of this youth movement, it was the idea of self-leadership which gave the organization its unique stamp and which formed the basic element of that which was later called the revolution of education.

The great battle cry which filled the youth of the nation with enthusiasm and which it constantly strove to accomplish in its own ranks was "social justice." The ambition of every great educator should be to preach ideals to the children of his country of which they need not be ashamed when they are grown men. The immeasurable importance of the work of national education of an Adolf Hitler or a Benito Mussolini is based on this. These men have given their nations ideals common to all generations. The forms of national service correspond to the age and the intelligence of the various generations. But the ideals are the same.

ROOSEVELT AND THE YOUTH OF EUROPE

When the man in the White House recently assembled three hundred students of his country in order to make an address to the youth of the world in their pres-

ence, all he was able to offer this youth were the old slogans of the French Revolution, that is, the mottoes of a political and spiritual uprising of European origin. Roosevelt, this self-appointed governess of the world, does not realize that, from a continent discovered by Europe, he is cabling to Europe doctrines which were entered here in the book of history a hundred and fifty years ago.

We know in what state the youth of America is. We know that millions of young American people had no bread and no work under Roosevelt, and that it will take perhaps another hundred and fifty years for an American president to announce to an amazed Europe that it should immediately found a winter-relief organization as well as institutions for occupational training or other things which we have had for a long time.

Roosevelt stands for retrogression. Anyone who has done as much as he to plunge the youth of the world into a war so that he may become President for the third time, anyone who is responsible for such social evils among the youth of his own country as he, can expect only one answer from the youth of Europe. By uniting in the European Youth Federation, the youth of our continent opposes Roosevelt the capitalist with the idea of the new national and socialist order.

This youth has not been bought with gold. It is recruited from all levels of the nations of Europe. Its leaders represent organizations in which the poorest children of the nation as well as those whose parents are well off co-operate with equal rights. Nowhere in the world does the word "equality" have more meaning than in those nations which do not judge people according to birth and property but solely according to their achievements.

THE FORMING OF THE EUROPEAN YOUTH FEDERATION

When, a long time ago, I began to consider the possibility of creating a European youth organization, I was aware of the fact that it would be many

years before the prerequisites for a union of the youth organizations of our continent would exist. The exchange of opinions and experiences, the numerous visits of youth leaders and youth delegations amongst each other, gradually created an atmosphere of agreement. While the delegations from various countries were pitting their strength against each other in athletic contests and, in a spirit of sportsmanship, contended for the laurels of victory, we leaders tried by question and answer to explore the ideas and nature of the youth organizations with which we came in contact. In this way, the leaders of the European youth organizations came to a better understanding with every meeting. Each time there was something new to report, and each time we had new questions, for education never stands still. There is no rigid system that can be applied to education which can answer requirements infallibly. All education is nationally determined. There is no standard formula of youth leadership that can be applied to all nations.

It was a typically English mistake founded on British conceit to think that the youth of the whole world could be led by the system of the Boy Scout Associations established during the Boer War. The significance of the European youth organizations is founded on the very fact that they have arisen as definite national, educational associations within each country and can only function properly in their own countries. However, the diversity in the youth of the various countries by no means hinders their mutual relations. On the contrary, it is this very independence and national character of the various organizations which serve as a guarantee that the European Youth Federation formed in Vienna on September 14, 1942, will fulfill its political and educational task. It was born with the program in which it made the respect of the individual member-nations for each other, gained in numerous meetings—in other words, the real comradeship of the youth of Europe—the basis of its activity.

ALL HAVE EQUAL RIGHTS

It is the task of the European Youth Federation to fortify and strengthen the consciousness of the common ties of all Europe in the younger generation of our continent. The European Youth Federation, a product of the New Order, is a co-operative association of nationally independent and nationally conscious youth organizations. This characteristic of the European Youth Federation precludes any interference in the internal affairs of the youth organization of any one country. Hence the European Youth Federation also rejects any pan-European efforts. The largest federation of youth leaders and educators ever founded, it starts from the principle that the nation, the home, and the national youth community are the decisive educational factors of youth. Those who loyally, conscientiously, and courageously do their duty toward their country thereby create the conditions for a European federation which can only be of value if its individual members are national representatives of their countries.

It is significant that those great thinkers, poets, and artists whom we consider great representatives of Europe are, in their own countries, regarded as the most perfect embodiments of the national spiritual life. Goethe's truly European significance originates from the fact that he is the ideal personification of the German spirit. He is the national poet of the Germans and, because of this, his works and his personality represent a contribution towards that culture which belongs to all the peoples of Europe. Europe is a sheaf of parallel rays representing the spiritual strength of each country, and anyone acquainted with Europe knows that the idea of making a hodgepodge of these national forces would lead to cultural sterility.

The European Youth Federation is not a creation of democracy. It would be in contradiction to the spirit of youth and to our entire collaboration so far if we were to work according to the parliamentary system of numbers, in other words, make the influence of each indi-

vidual organization in the circle of leaders dependent on the number of its members. In this council, the youth of every nation invited to join the European Youth Federation—whether of a large or small nation—has a seat and a voice. In the working committees, a member of that organization presides which has attained outstanding achievements in the special field of that committee. The members of the European Youth Federation all have equal rights.

The German-Italian presiding committee, which has taken over the direction of the European Youth Federation by consent of all members, makes all its decisions jointly. They are passed on to the members in writing and must bear the signatures of the German and Italian presiding committee. The European Youth Federation meets every year at a congress, and one of its principles is that every member-nation can expect to have a youth congress take place on its soil. The presidents of the working committees may, if they think it necessary, also convoke a meeting of the members of the working committees with the consent of the President and independently of the European youth congresses. In such cases, a city of that country is, if possible, to be proposed as place of meeting which is represented by the president of the working committee. No member of a working committee may be urged to report on such affairs as should be kept secret in the interests of his country.

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Among the continents of the world, Europe is, from a geographical point of

view, one of the lesser ones. But of what importance is geographical extent in the history of mankind? Since the day on which Zeus approached beautiful Europa in order to carry her off into a land where the god wedded the beauty of this earth, many thousands of years have passed. Europe is more than a continent. Europe is a sacred symbol of mankind. Since the days of Zeus, the god has merged with his creation over and over again on our soil. The reflection of the eternal shines today as strongly as ever from the stones of the Acropolis and the Parthenon. There is no European people that, in these years of struggle and trial, should not recall its divine origin. What does it signify to us, the people of 1943, that the great sons of this soil were the children of their time and their destiny, and that our peoples inflicted wounds upon each other, and that the noise of battle echoed unceasingly throughout our countries? At last, at last, we are becoming conscious of our common ties. Late, but not too late, we have discovered the old continent. It is the world of heroes, whether they are called Alexander, Caesar, Frederick the Great, or Napoleon, the world of poets from Homer and Dante to Goethe, the world of thinkers, from Plato to Kant and Nietzsche, the world of music from Bach to Mozart, Beethoven, Wagner, and Verdi. It fills us with pride to mention these names. What has Roosevelt to offer in their place?

In 1492, Columbus set foot on the shores of the New World. In 1942, we discovered the Old World, which is eternal.